

Summary:

Nine foreign students and instructors currently living in Augsburg – some only for a semester, others for dozens of years – have been interviewed about Germany. Topics are for example German music, Christmas traditions and food – and their differences to the respective home countries which may result in odd experiences.

Narrator: Germany: A country famous for its delicious dishes, marvelous music, friendly folks and polite people, and its neat nature.

We wanted to find out what people coming from different countries and now living in Germany really know and think about the country and its people. We interviewed people from all over the world now studying and working at the University of Augsburg.

A.R. Leyva-García: I am Ana Rebeca Leyva-García. I come from Mexico and I've lived here for 5 years already and I'm working for the University of Augsburg as a Spanish teacher.

Gyöngyi: Hello, my name is Gyöngyi Mår. I come from Slovakia. I study "Deutsch als Fremdsprache".

P. James: My name is Peter James. I work in the language center of the University of Augsburg and I'm from the nicest part of England.

Fiorella: I am Fiorella Guichardaz. I come from north Italy, Aosta and I am here in Augsburg for one semester and I study mathematics.

Antonio Luca: Hello everybody, I am Manca Antonio Luca and I come from the south of Italy. I am a university student and I study informatics and mathematics.

A. Sawatari: My name is Akiko Sawatari. I am from Osaka, Japan, and I'm a Japanese instructor.

E. O'Leary: My name is Liz O'Leary. I am Irish and I've been here for about 19 years and I teach at the Sprachenzentrum of the University of Augsburg.

A.M. Gamble-Brodte: Hi, my name is Aisha Gamble-Brodte. I teach English at the Sprachenzentrum and I'm from the United States, from Virginia.

W. Brenner: My name is Wesley Brenner. I am from Seattle, Washington, in the United States, and I also teach in the Sprachenzentrum. I teach law and English.

Narrator: So you come from various countries and you have one thing in common: You're now living in Germany. Let's do some brainstorming first: Name some words that come to your mind when you think about Germany.

E. O'Leary: "organized"

A.M. Gamble-Brodte: "punctual"

W. Brenner: “tidy”

A.M. Gamble-Brodte: “friendly”

E. O'Leary: “strict”

W. Brenner: “proper”, “subdued”

E. O'Leary: “interested”

Gyöngyi: “Kiel”, “Nordsee”, “Bayern München”, “Schumacher”, and “World War”

P. James: The Germans are very thorough and they like eating cakes.

Narrator: Anything else?

Fiorella: They drink a lot of beer. They are always on time. They eat a lot of sausages.

Narrator: So you think this kind of food is typically German? Then tell us: What are the differences to the food of your home country?

Fiorella: Germans cannot cook pasta. Pasta is always too soft. And Germans put a lot of sauce on every food.

A.R. Leyva-García: Well, the differences for me are very clear, especially that in my country the food is very spicy. We eat lots of chili, lots of lemon – on everything. You put lemon to your pizza, spaghetti ... everything with lemon and chili.

A. Sawatari: Japanese food is healthy in comparison to German food. We eat many fishes and seaweeds and it's not so oily.

Narrator: So you mentioned “beer” before. What about alcohol and cigarettes?

E. O'Leary: Kids, teenagers, smoke and drink a lot more here than they would in Ireland. I'm quite surprised at the number of kids at *S-Bahn* stations, having their bottle of beer on a Friday evening. That's very different. There is greater acceptance of kids drinking here...

W. Brenner: It's just sort of culture, I think. I mean, of course it's 21 as the drinking age in the U.S. You see fewer teenagers drinking – I don't know if that means fewer teenagers are drinking but you just don't see it as often because they're doing it behind those doors.

A.M. Gamble-Brodte: Exactly.

Antonio Luca: Cigarette are a little bit more expensive than in Italy. And...

Fiorella: Cigarettes are everywhere.

Antonio Luca: Yeah, in Italy there is the automat next to the smoke shops. But here you can find also when you get out of the church or...

Fiorella: ... the church, the cinema, ...

A.R. Leyva-García: I think it's easier to get here as well: at the university you can drink, you can drink on the streets – that's prohibited in Mexico.

Narrator: Let's turn to something completely different: German music. Do you know any German musicians?

P. James: Bach and Mozart.

Gyöngyi: Lena, Grönemeyer, Tokio Hotel...

A.R. Leyva-García: On the one hand, there are the classical musicians like Bach – Johann Sebastian Bach – or Beethoven, Strauss – Josef Strauss – ... but I think he was Austrian, actually. And then you have the modern music: From this category I could name some like Nena, Die Ärzte, Die Toten Hosen, Böhse Onkelz, Sportfreunde Stiller, Jangaman (*rather: Ganjaman*) – that's a reggae group from Berlin.

Antonio Luca: "He, ho, spann den Wagen an..."

A.R. Leyva-García: „Bitte gib mir nur ein oh, bitte gib mir nur ein oh..."

A. Sawatari: „Hasenbraten ist ein feines Essen..."

Fiorella: "Hey, das geht ab! Die feiern die ganze Nacht, die ganze Nacht. Das geht ab! Die feiern die ganze Nacht, die ganze Nacht."

Narrator: And it's Christmas season. Would you like to present a Christmas Carol of your home country?

P. James: "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head."

Gyöngyi: (sings to the melody of "Silent Night")

Fiorella and Antonio Luca: (sing to the melody of "Oh Christmas Tree")

Narrator: How is Christmas celebrated in your home country?

A. Sawatari: Not religious... We celebrate with a decorated fancy cake and with a artificial plastic Christmas tree.

P. James: On the 25th of December people give each other presents and they have a meal together.

W. Brenner: 25th of December...

E. O'Leary: Yeah, we also celebrate in Ireland on the 25th.

A.M. Gamble-Brodte: Mhm... on the 25th as well, with the family, Christmas tree...

W. Brenner: Yeah. Open the presents in the morning.

E. O'Leary: Santa Clause... You open presents in the morning as well?

- W. Brenner: Yeah, on the morning of the 25th – Santa Clause brings them the night before.
- E. O'Leary: We have lots of food...
- W. Brenner: Yeah, big dinner that night.
- E. O'Leary: ...and one or two drinks... and watch a lot of “Kevin Alone at Home” and that kind of thing.
- W. Brenner: Oh yeah yeah yeah, Christmas movies and only a little bit of family feud, feuding, just a small amount of fighting.
- A.M. Gamble-Brodte: Right, right.
- Fiorella: We have a Christmas tree.
- Antonio Luca: That's not very different.
- Narrator: Ah, OK. So Christmas in your home country isn't that different from Christmas traditions in Germany. But what about culture clash in general? Have you had any funny or embarrassing experiences in Germany you want to share with us?
- A.R. Leyva-García: „We had a barbecue with my classmates and other teachers and after eating I wanted to have a gum, a chewing gum, because we had eaten lots of stuff. And then I went to one of the teachers and ask: “Hast du einen Gummi?”
- P. James: I don't really like potato dumplings and my family doesn't either. When my family came over when we got married, we had lunch in my mother-in-law's garden and she made dumplings. And ever since that day I've been teasing my wife by telling her that when none of the German family were looking, they threw the dumplings over the garden, and so she doesn't know whether to believe me.
- Fiorella: In Italy, when you say hello to someone you kiss the cheeks like this. And it was very embarrassing here because people are not used to do that.
- A. Sawatari: If I came to Germany, one of my German friends invited me to a lunch. And at first he served a big Apfelstrudel but I didn't eat much because I wanted to eat main dish after this tea time. But of course I couldn't get any more because it was a main dish. And it is not believable for us Japanese to serve the sweets as a main dish.
- E. O'Leary: Every time I go to the supermarket and I'm waiting, I'm standing in line and I speak to the person behind me which is what we would do, what I learned, they look at me as if I'm gone completely insane, as if the men in the white coats should come and take me immediately – and that's very different to, you know, in Ireland you talk to everyone around you at the supermarket or at the bus stop.
- W. Brenner: How about just being in lines in general in Germany? That don't exist. I'm mean: people don't get in line. They just form a group and whoever can push themselves to the front gets the prize. That's my theory. You're fighting for your life.

Narrator: So what did we learn? Germany is indeed the country of Bratwurst, punctuality and classical music. However, there are also many aspects that Germany and other countries have in common. Apparently, Germany has welcomed you cordially and just left a positive impression on you. Of course, you had also to adapt to the German peculiarities – but that’s what makes living in a multicultural society so interesting.

Authors:

Dilara Abdi, Fabian Christi, Vanessa Appoh, Martina Schlott, Martina Schwalm